



MASSACHUSETTS GUIDE

Hunting, Freshwater Fishing, and Trapping Laws

2017

For more information on sporting laws and regulations, please refer to the 2017 *Massachusetts Guide* online at www.mass.gov/masswildlife or pick up a copy at sporting license vendor locations across the state.



FISHING SEASONS AND LIMITS

SPECIES	OPEN SEASON (ALL DATES INCLUSIVE)	DAILY CREEL LIMIT	MINIMUM LENGTH ¹
Trout ²			
Lakes, ponds, major rivers ^{3, 5, 6}	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	3	—
Housatonic River ⁴	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	1	20"
All other rivers and brooks	Apr. 1 – Sept. 10	8	—
	Sept. 11 – Mar. 31, 2018	3	
Lake Trout			
Wachusett Reservoir ⁶	(see note 6)	3	—
Quabbin ⁶	(see note 6)	2	18"
Landlocked Salmon ⁶	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	2	15"
American Shad ⁷ (Connecticut and Merrimack rivers only, including their tributaries.)	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	3	—
Chain Pickerel	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	5	15"
Black Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth, singly or combined):	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	5	12"
Northern Pike	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	1	28"
Tiger Muskellunge	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	1	28"
Walleye	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	5	14"
Smelt ⁸	Jan. 1 – Feb. 28	—	—
	May 16 – Dec. 31		
All Other Freshwater Species ⁹	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	—	—
Striped Bass and Herring: For season, size, and possession limits call the Division of Marine Fisheries at (617) 626-1520, or visit their website at mass.gov/marine-fisheries .			
Possession of: Sturgeon (all species), American Brook Lamprey, Atlantic (sea-run) Salmon, Bridle Shiner, Burbot, Eastern Silvery Minnow, Lake Chub, Longnose Sucker, and Northern Redbelly Dace is illegal! If caught, release immediately. This means remove hook or cut line and return fish to water immediately — do not pose for photographs, place on a stringer, hold in a net, or delay in any way the immediate return and release of these rare fish to the water!			

- Minimum length** is measured as the straight line (not curved over the body) from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail. The tips of any forked tail may be squeezed together for the final measurement.
- Trout** applies to Brook, Brown, Rainbow, and Tiger Trout (a cross between a female Brown and a male Brook Trout). From Apr. 1 to Sept. 10, no more than 8 trout (as defined) may be taken daily, and only 3 of those trout may be from lakes, ponds, or major rivers³. From Sept. 11 to Mar. 31, no more than 3 trout (as defined) may be taken daily.
- Major Rivers:** Childs, Coonamessett, Deerfield, Farmington, Green (Colrain), Green (Great Barrington), Ipswich, Jones, Mashpee, Millers, Nissitissit, North (Colrain), North (West Branch), Parker, Quaboag, Quinapoxet, Quinebaug, Seven Mile, Santuit, Scorton Creek, Shawsheen, Squannacook, Stillwater (Sterling, Princeton), Swift (East Branch), Swift (Winsor Dam to Ware River, except as posted), Tully (East and West Branches), Ware, Ware (East Branch), Westfield (all branches).

- Mainstem Housatonic only**, from the confluence of the East and West Branches to the MA–CT line, exclusive of the catch-and-release areas where no trout may be kept.
- Special Brown Trout water:** South Pond (Quacumquasit), Brookfield. Total daily creel is 3 trout but only 1 may be a Brown Trout and it must be at least 15".
- Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs:** Opening and closing dates are set by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Quabbin Reservoir Fishing Season generally opens on the third Saturday of April and runs through the third Saturday in October, but these dates may be adjusted due to weather and other factors. Quabbin Reservoir and its tributary streams within the Quabbin Reservation are closed to all fishing except during the open season as set by DCR. The Quabbin Fishing Guide is available at: mass.gov/dcr/quabbinfish or by calling (413) 323-7221. The Wachusett/Sudbury/West Waushacum fishing season normally opens the first Saturday in April and closes November 30, but the DCR/DWSP may

- alter those dates depending on ice conditions. At Wachusett Reservoir, shoreline fishing only is allowed from Gate 6 on Route 70 to Gate 36 on Route 110. A Wachusett and Sudbury Reservoir Fishing Guide is available at: mass.gov/dcr/wachusettfish or by calling (508) 792-7806.
- American Shad** are Catch-and-Release ONLY on all waters **except** the Connecticut and Merrimack rivers, including their tributaries.
 - Smelt** may be taken by hook and line only.
 - Excluding the state- and federally-listed species listed after the "Possession of:" heading in the bottom row of the table shown above.

FREE FISHING WEEKEND

June 3 & 4, 2017 —
No license needed!

HUNTING SEASONS & BAG LIMITS

NO HUNTING ON SUNDAY

		OPEN SEASON (ALL DATES INCLUSIVE)	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	ANNUAL LIMIT
BLACK BEAR					
Black Bear	Zones 1-14	First Season	Sept. 5 – Sept. 23	See "Black Bear," below.	1
		Second Season	Nov. 6 – Nov. 25		
		Shotgun Season (restrictions apply*)	Nov. 27 – Dec. 9		

*Hunters must wear 500 square inches of hunter orange on their head, chest and back. Rifles and handguns prohibited.

UPLAND GAME BIRDS*					
Wild Turkey	Spring: Zones 1–13	April 24 – May 20	See "Wild Turkey," below.		
	Fall: Zones 1–13	Oct. 23 – Nov. 4			
	Youth Hunt: Zones 1-13	April 22 (see box below)			
Crow	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – April 10 July 1 – April 10, 2018	—	—	—
Pheasant	Zones 1–14	Oct. 14 – Nov. 25	2	4	6
	Youth Hunt	See page 47.			
Quail	Zones 11–14	Oct. 14 – Nov. 25	4	8	20
Ruffed Grouse	Zones 1–14	Oct. 14 – Nov. 25	3	6	15

Upland game bird hunting is closed during shotgun deer season.

DEER					
Deer	Youth Deer Hunt	Sept. 30	See "Deer," below and pages 38–39.		1 antlered deer OR 1 antlerless deer in Zone specified in permit during season
	Paraplegic Hunt	Nov. 2 – Nov. 4	See "Deer," below and pages 38–39.		2 antlered deer + antlerless deer by permit
	Archery	Oct. 16 – Nov. 25			
	Shotgun	Nov. 27 – Dec. 9			
	Primitive Firearms	Dec. 11 – Dec. 30			

RABBITS AND SQUIRREL					
Cottontail Rabbit	Zones 1-12	Jan. 2 – Feb. 28, Oct. 14 – Feb. 28, 2018	5	10	—
	Zones 13 and 14	Jan. 2 – Feb. 28, Nov. 15 – Feb. 28, 2018	5	10	—
Snowshoe Hare	Zones 1–4	Jan. 2 – Feb. 28, Oct. 14 – Feb. 28, 2018	2	4	—
	Zones 5–12	Jan. 2 – Feb. 4, Oct. 14 – Feb. 5, 2018	2	4	—
	Zones 13 and 14	Jan. 2 – Feb. 4, Nov. 14 – Feb. 5, 2018	2	4	—
Jackrabbit	Zone 14	Nov. 15 – Dec. 30	1	2	—
Gray Squirrel	Zones 1–9	Sept. 11 – Jan. 2, 2018	5	10	—
	Zones 10–14	Oct. 14 – Jan. 2, 2018	5	10	—

Cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, jackrabbit, and gray squirrel hunting are closed during shotgun deer season.

FURBEARERS					
Bobcat	Zones 1–8	Jan. 2 – Mar. 8, Dec. 20 – Mar. 8, 2018	—	—	—
Coyote	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Mar. 8, Oct. 14 – Mar. 8, 2018	—	—	—
Fox (red or gray)	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Feb. 28, Nov. 1 – Feb. 28, 2018	—	—	—
Raccoon	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Jan. 31, Oct. 2 – Jan. 31, 2018	3	* see Raccoon below	—
Opossum	Zones 1–14	Jan. 2 – Jan. 31, Oct. 2 – Jan. 31, 2018	—	—	—

All furbearer hunting seasons are closed during the shotgun deer season except for coyotes.

FURBEARER TRAPPING

SPECIES	OPEN SEASON (ALL DATES INCLUSIVE)
Bobcat ^{1,2} , Coyote ¹ , Fox ¹ , Weasel	Nov. 1 – Nov. 30
Fisher ¹	Nov. 1 – Nov. 22
Mink ¹ , River Otter ¹	Nov. 1 – Dec. 15
Beaver ¹	Jan. 1 – April 15, Nov. 1 – April 15, 2018
Muskrat, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunk	Jan. 1 – Feb. 28, Nov. 1 – Feb. 28, 2018

1 – Pelt sealing required; see page 44.

2 – Bobcats may only be trapped in zones 1-8



TO REPORT VIOLATIONS
(800) 632-8075

www.mass.gov/ole